



**Supreme Court of New Mexico
New Mexico Supreme Court
Fund for Access to Justice**

2016 Request for Proposals

NEW MEXICO COMMISSION ON ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Administrative Office of the Courts

**237 Don Gaspar, Room 25
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501-2178
(505) 827-4822 • Fax (505) 827-4824**

Release Date: December 17, 2015

Due Date: Wednesday, January 20, 2016 at 4:00 PM

LATE SUBMISSIONS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED

Grant Period: May 1, 2016 through April 30, 2017

Amount to be awarded: Approximately \$ 400,000

Introduction

The Access to Justice Commission seeks grant applications from nonprofit organizations that provide civil legal services to low income New Mexicans within the scope of the current *State Plan for Providing Civil Legal Aid to Low Income New Mexicans* (“State Plan”). Upon review of the applications and recommendations by the Access to Justice Commission, the Supreme Court of New Mexico will make the final decision regarding applicants to be awarded grants and the amount of each grant. Funds for these grants will be drawn from the “New Mexico Supreme Court Fund for Access to Justice”. See the Supreme Court’s website for 1) a description of the Fund and the Court’s grant making process, and 2) a copy of the current State Plan. The current State Plan and related information can be accessed at the New Mexico Courts website using the following link: <http://www.nmcourts.gov/newface/access2justice/index.php>.

Total funds available for 2016 grants will depend on amounts collected in the final quarter of 2015 and in early 2016. The current estimate is that approximately \$400,000 will be awarded to successful applicants.

Eligibility

To be eligible to receive an Access to Justice grant, an applicant must be either:

1. A nonprofit organization with a current or pending 501(c) (3) status that:
 - a. Has as its primary mission the delivery of legal services to low income persons.
 - b. Provides services using one or more of the service delivery methods identified in the current State Plan.
 - c. Employs (*not* contracts with) at least one full-time attorney who devotes at least 75% of his or her time to representation of low income persons.

OR

2. Is an in-house legal department within a larger nonprofit organization with current or pending 501(c)(3) status that meets criteria (a), (b), and (c) above.

Process

Applications will be received by the Administrative Office of the Courts. If the applicant is eligible and the application is complete, the application will

be sent to all members of the Supreme Court and to the Access to Justice Commission's (AtJ) Grants Committee for review. The Grants Committee, which consists of all members of the AtJ who are not associated with a possible applicant, will meet in closed session to make its recommendations regarding applicants to be approved and amounts to be awarded. The Committee's recommendations will be sent to the Supreme Court, which will make the final award decisions. Successful applicants and amounts awarded will then be announced. Contracts based on the approved applications will be negotiated for one year, beginning on May 1, 2016. Work performed with New Mexico Supreme Court Fund for Access to Justice grants will be evaluated by the Civil Legal Services Commission.

Criteria

The AtJ has adopted the following grant criteria which will be applied as it makes its recommendations to the Supreme Court:

1. Applications should be for one year of funds.
2. Persons to be directly served or benefited must have household incomes of 200% or less of the federal poverty level, with most of the persons served or benefited having household incomes of 125% or less.
3. Priority will be given to proposed projects that take the following into consideration:
 - The Supreme Court has frequently expressed concern about the small number of eligible persons that are directly served or are benefited by the work of legal services organizations. Projects that significantly increase the number of eligible persons served or benefited will be favorably received.
 - The current State Plan identifies priority client groups and important substantive issues. Projects that address the needs of these groups or the substantive issues identified in the State Plan will be favored, but the Commission will consider applications serving any eligible client group. See the current State Plan for the current list of priority clients and substantive issues.
 - The Supreme Court prefers that its funds be used to cover the costs of serving eligible persons, rather than for administration, overhead, or purchase of equipment. Applicants should plan to use funds from other sources to cover some or all of their administrative, overhead and equipment costs. Reasonable administrative and overhead costs might be approved in unusual

situations, but these costs will be very carefully scrutinized. Equipment essential to the success of the proposed project might also be approved after very careful scrutiny.

- The Court wishes to eliminate the perception of duplication in the delivery system. Applicants seeking funds for activities similar to those conducted by other eligible organizations are advised to carefully consider submitting a joint application.
- The Court strongly prefers projects that address client's complete needs for legal services on particular matters, rather than simply one part of that need. In particular, applications to assist victims of domestic violence that propose to only offer assistance in obtaining Orders of Protection will *not* be approved, nor will applications from Domestic Violence shelters that lack an in-house legal department with a full-time attorney. On the other hand, applications that propose to provide full representation to a victim will be favorably received.
- The Court prefers integrated approaches to problems. For example, the Court approved a planning grant from three providers aimed at developing a coordinated approach for assisting recent immigrants. The Commission will continue to recommend funding of planning grants that will produce an integrated approach to complex problems.
- Projects that will make services available throughout the state will be favored, as will those that focus on the needs of eligible persons living in rural parts of the state.
- Applicants may propose sub-contracts to other organizations and/or contracts with private attorneys. Applicants proposing sub-contracts should understand that the applicant, not the sub-contractor, will be responsible for completion of all proposed services on time and within budget.

Instructions for preparing and submitting your application begin on the next page.

If you have **any** questions—especially, about whether your organization or in-house legal department is an eligible applicant—or need additional information, we urge you to contact Tina Sibbitt, Associate Staff Attorney at the Administrative Office of the Courts, as follows:

- Email: aoctrs@nmcourts.gov
- Phone: (505) 476-0509

- Mail: Tina R. Sibbitt, Administrative Office of the Courts, 237 Don Gaspar Ave., Rm. 25 Santa Fe, NM 87501

Preparing Your Application

**Applications are due no later than
Wednesday, January 20, 2016 at 4:00 PM**

LATE APPLICATIONS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED

Introduction

You will be applying for one or more “projects”. A project is a set of activities carried out by your staff or volunteers that addresses an important legal need and will be managed as a single, coherent effort.

You may apply for funds to support 1) one or more on-going projects; and/or 2) one or more new projects. You may also subcontract a part of your project(s) to other organizations.

If you request funds for more than one project, you must submit a separate and complete application of each project.

Your application will consist of five parts, to be submitted in the order shown:

1. Cover page, containing key information about your organization or in-house legal department, a summary of your narrative, total project funds, amount applied for, and contact information. This form is an Adobe Acrobat template with fields that can be filled in.
2. Signature page, containing assurances. Also an Adobe Acrobat template.
3. Narrative (see below).
4. Budget Summary. An Excel template (see below).
5. Budget Detail and Justification. You may use this template or another Excel spreadsheet showing a) the line items whose totals are shown on the Budget Summary and b) if necessary, why the line item amounts are reasonable.

NOTHING ELSE: no appendices or attachments, *unless* you propose to use subcontractors. In that situation, attach a copy of your proposed contract(s). If the Grants Committee needs additional information, Tina Sibbitt will call or email the contact person shown on the cover page of your application.

Suggested Approach

START WORK ON THIS APPLICATION **NOW**.

Intent to Apply

You do not need to be a current or past recipient of an Access to Justice Grant in order to apply for a grant, but read the announcement carefully to be sure that your organization is an eligible applicant.

If you intend to apply for an Access to Justice Grant, send an email to Tina Sibbitt at aoctrs@nmcourts.gov. In the email, state your intent to apply, name the contact person for your organization with information on how this person can be contacted via email, telephone and mail. Tina will respond by email acknowledging receipt of the intent to apply, with copies of all required forms in Adobe Acrobat and Excel formats. She will also place the contact person's name on a list of persons to receive any further instructions, copies of all questions asked by potential applicants, and all responses.

Submitting an "Intent to Apply" does not obligate your organization to submit an application, but you should again notify Tina by email if you decide not to apply.

Before You Start Writing

Decide if you will apply for funds to continue an existing activity ("on-going project") or for something new ("new project"), or for both.

Decide whether you will submit one project, or more than one project. When considering whether to submit more than one project, remember that funds are limited and that you must submit a complete application for each project.

Decide if you will include other organizations in your application. If yes, will you and your partners be ready to offer integrated services on May 1, 2016? If not, consider applying for a planning grant. No matter what you apply for, you must decide which organization will be the applicant and which organization(s) will receive sub-contracts from the applicant. Note that you will need authorization to apply for funds on behalf of each of the organizations that will receive subcontracts. You will also need copies of your current contract (if any) with these organizations, and copies of the contract(s) you propose to use in 2016.

Then, think carefully about what you want to accomplish: Whom will you

serve? What will you do for and with them? What staff and/or volunteers will you need? How will the lives of the people served be made better by your efforts? Will substantially more people benefit from your efforts than those you directly serve?

Determine the rough cost of your effort.

Take a hard look at your project or projects. Resources are scarce. Is this a truly important project? Are the costs reasonable? Will you be able to produce the results? If the answer to these questions is “yes”, start writing the narrative and perfecting your budget. If “no,” use this experience to develop a better project.

Writing Your Application

Write the narrative first (see detailed instructions below). Assume that the members of the AtJ Grants Committee know that there are poor people with legal needs in New Mexico. Skip extensive discussion of the need being addressed. Instead, focus on: 1) ***specifically, who will be served;*** 2) ***what you will do for and with the people served;*** and 3) ***results: how their lives will be changed for the better by your project.***

Then complete the budget forms (again, see below). If you will be using subcontracts, show the amounts that the applicant and each subcontractor will receive on the bottom table on the Budget Summary form.

Prepare the Cover page. Condense the narrative to fit the space available. This will be the reviewers’ first impression of your proposal—condense with care. Then complete the rest of the form.

Finally, fill out and sign the Signature page.

Instructions: Narrative

Provide the following information, in the order shown, aiming for **no more than 4 pages** with at least one half inch margins and 12 point fonts or **6 pages with the same margins and 14 point fonts**. (The Court prefers 14 point, as used in this document).

Note that there are separate instructions for an on-going and a new project.

On-Going Project

1. *Prior Activities and Results*: **Briefly** describe what this project has done (who served and typical activities) and what it has accomplished since its inception. Show the number of people directly served (in an attorney/client relationship, attending seminars or other events, or helped using one of the legal methods in the State Plan) in 2016 *and* the number of people benefitted (that is, indirectly benefitting from the services provided to person(s) directly served). If you propose to continue an educational project (e.g. training low income persons to represent themselves or their families) describe as precisely as possible what attendees did as a result of the training.
2. *2016 Proposed Activities*: **In some detail**, describe what you will do for and with the people to be served. Be sure to describe how the project will be coordinated with other legal aid providers and social services organizations. If subcontracts will be used, describe the role of each participating organization in some detail.
3. *2016 Monitoring and Evaluation*: How will you know that the project is proceeding as planned? How will you determine that it has produced the expected changes in people's lives?
4. *2016 Manager(s)*: Name the person(s) who will manage this project and *very* briefly describe their qualifications to manage this particular project.
5. *2016 Volunteers*: Briefly describe how volunteers will be used for this particular project. Name the person who will recruit and supervise volunteers.
6. *2016 Training and Support*: Briefly describe when and how training will be provided to managers, staff and volunteers. Briefly describe the source of any professional support to be provided.
7. *2016 Statements of Work to be accomplished*. Successful applicants will receive a contract from the State Bar of New Mexico, which administers the New Mexico Supreme Court Fund for Access to Justice. Each contract

will include one or more statements of work to be accomplished during 2016.

In this part of the narrative, write statements of work that you would like to see in your contract. These statements are typically accepted by the Court and/or the State Bar, but they may be changed in contract negotiations. These statements will not count against the suggested limit of 4 (or 6, if 14 point fonts) pages of narrative.

Typically, statements (numbered, if more than one) use the following format:

- (Verb or verb phrase) (number) (kind of low income persons or groups served) (strategy to be used) producing (numbers) (low income persons benefitted).
- For example: “Continue the on-going foreclosure project by providing direct representation to 25 families facing eviction in rural areas using, to the extent feasible, video communication. The project will benefit 75 persons directly, and all the residents of the communities where a low income person is represented, by reducing the number of vacant or abandoned houses.”

If you are a successful applicant, the wording of these statements will be negotiated before you sign your contract.

8. *2016 Revised Statements of Work to be accomplished.* The Access to Justice Commission typically receives requests for at least twice the amount available. This means that the amounts requested by successful applicants are often cut, sometimes by 50% or more. In this section of your narrative, answer the following questions:

- If the amount you request for your project is significantly reduced, will the project still be viable?
- How will the scope of your project be affected by a 50% cut in funds requested?

If funds awarded are significantly less than the amount requested, you will be asked to rewrite your proposed statements of work to reflect reduced funding. The Civil Legal Services Commission will also use these statements to evaluate your project

Note that, once your contract is signed, a change in any statements of work to be accomplished or in your contracted budget must be approved by an AtJ Committee, or, if extensive, by the Supreme Court.

New Project or Planning Grant

1. *Need:* **Briefly**, Who will be served? What are their legal needs? Why are services for this group needed *now*?
2. *Activities:* **In detail**, describe what you will do for and with the people to be served. How will the project be coordinated with other legal aid providers and social services organizations? If subcontracts will be used, describe the role of each participating organization in some detail.
3. *Monitoring and Evaluation:* How will you know that the project is proceeding as planned? How will you determine that it has produced the expected changes in people's lives?
4. *Manager(s):* Name the person(s) who will manage this project and very briefly describe their qualifications to manage this particular project. If the managers for this project have not been hired, show the expected date for hiring on your timeline (see below).
5. *Staff:* Name the person(s) who will staff this project and very briefly describe their qualifications. If the staff for this project have not been hired, show the expected date for hiring on your timeline (see below).
6. *Volunteers:* Briefly describe how volunteers will be used for this particular project. Name the person who will recruit and supervise volunteers.
7. *Training and Support.* Briefly describe when and how any needed training will be provided to managers, staff and volunteers. Briefly describe the source of any professional support to be provided.
8. *Timeline.* Show, either as a graph or a series of statements, the dates when key parts of your proposed project will begin and end.
9. *Statements of Work to be accomplished.* Successful applicants will receive a contract from the State Bar of New Mexico, which administers the New Mexico Supreme Court Fund for Access to Justice. Each contract will include one or more statements of work to be accomplished during 2016.

In this part of the narrative, write statements of work that you would like to see in your contract. These statements are typically accepted by the Court and/or the State Bar, but they may be changed in contract negotiations. These statements will not count against the suggested limit of 4 (or 6, if 14 point fonts) pages of narrative.

Typically, statements (numbered, if more than one) use the following format:

- (Verb or verb phrase) (number) (kind of low income persons or groups served) (strategy to be used) producing (numbers) (low income persons

benefitted).

- For example: “Continue the on-going foreclosure project by providing direct representation to 25 families facing eviction in rural areas using, to the extent feasible, video communication. The project will benefit 75 persons directly, and all the residents of the communities where a low income person is represented, by reducing the number of vacant or abandoned houses.”

If you are a successful applicant, the wording of these statements will be negotiated before you sign your contract.

10. *2016 Revised Statements of Work to be accomplished.* The Access to Justice Commission typically receives requests for at least twice the amount available. This means that the amounts requested by successful applicants are often cut, sometimes by 50% or more. In this section of your narrative, answer the following questions:

- If the amount you request for your project is significantly reduced, will the project still be viable?
- How will the scope of your project be affected by a 50% cut in funds requested?

If funds awarded are significantly less than the amount requested, you will be asked to rewrite your proposed statements of work to reflect reduced funding. The Civil Legal Services Commission will also use these statements to evaluate your project

Note that, once your contract is signed, a change in any statements of work to be accomplished or in your contracted budget must be approved by an AtJ Committee, or, if extensive, by the Supreme Court.

Instructions: Budget Detail

Prepare a draft line item budget. You may use the “2016 Budget Detail” Excel form sent to you in response to your intent to file, or any other form that covers the same budget items. Once you have finished preparing the draft line item budget using the “2016 Budget Detail” form or some other form, take an objective look at the proposed costs:

- Given your narrative’s description of work to be accomplished, is the cost reasonable?
- Can administrative costs be justified? Are there no other sources of funds that could be used to cover these costs?
- Are staff salaries and wages comparable to those of other legal services organizations in New Mexico? If higher (or lower), can they be justified?
- Are you providing health insurance to all employees assigned to this project? If yes, show the percent of total premiums paid by the employer in the space provided. If health insurance is not made available by the employer, explain why in the justification section.
- Is the cost of other employment benefits reasonable?
- Are any overhead costs (space, communications, travel, office supplies, equipment, etc.) to be paid with grant funds? If yes, use the justification section to explain why these costs are essential to the production of the project’s goal and why there are no other sources of funds that could be used to cover these costs?
- Do you know what you will do to retain as much of the proposed project as possible if the amount you request is cut?

Instructions: Budget Summary

Once you are satisfied with the answers to the above questions, transfer the numbers to the “2016 Budget Summary” form. While you may use any form for your line item budget, you must use the “2016 Budget Summary” form (sent as part of the packet acknowledging receipt of your intent to file) to show your budget on one page. The total shown on your Cover Page must be the same as the totals on your Budget Detail and Budget Summary.

Finally, use the justification sections in the Budget Detail form (or a brief memo) to explain any costs that a knowledgeable reviewer might question. For example, justify salaries or employment benefits that are higher (or lower) than the average in NM legal aid programs. If you do not offer employer (full or partially) paid health insurance, explain why. If you request

funds for program administration, or for purchase of equipment, explain why these costs cannot be paid from some other source of funds. You do not have to justify every cost, but, if you have doubts about whether a cost should be justified, err on the side of providing more, rather than less, information.

Instructions: Cover Page

Use the Adobe Acrobat Cover Page template sent to you in response to your intent to file. We suggest that, when the information requested is short (organization name, etc.) you enter the requested information directly on the form. While you can also enter the project summary directly on the form, you may find it easier to write the summary using a word-processing program, and then copy and paste the text in the box. Note that, if your text needs more space than is allowed on the form, the form will shrink your font size. If this happens, shorten your text so it will appear in at least 12 point on the form. Once the form is filled out, print a copy to attach to the signature page. Before printing the form, make sure that the box containing the project summary has not pushed the bottom of the cover page onto a second page. If it has, shorten your project summary so that, when printed, the cover page is fully contained on one page.

Instructions: Signature Page

Use the Adobe Acrobat Signature Page template sent to you in response to your notice of intent to file. Once filled out, print a copy. Have an authorized signor sign the form. Attach it to the printed Cover Page and mail both forms to:

- Tina Sibbitt
- Administrative office of the Courts, Room 25
- 237 Don Gaspar AV
- Santa Fe, NM 87501

Saving Your Application

When you have completed all sections of your application(s), prepare your application(s) for electronic submission. There are two ways to submit your application:

1. **As 5 separate files.** When you are satisfied with the content of your five files (cover page, signature page, narrative, budget summary, and budget detail), name each of them as follows:

[short name of applicant] 2016 Cover: e.g. “Pegasus 2016 Cover”

[short name of applicant] 2016 Signature

[short name of applicant] 2016 Narrative

[short name of applicant] 2016 Budget Summary

[short name of applicant] 2016 Budget Detail

Then, open each file that is not already in .pdf format and save it with the same name as a .pdf file. (In an open Microsoft Word or Excel document, click on File, Print, drop the list of possible printers, choose Adobe PDF, click on “Print”. A new file in .pdf format will be generated. Choose the location for the new file and hit OK).

2. **As a single .pdf file**, prepared using Adobe Acrobat (*not Acrobat Reader*) or another program that can combine separate .pdf files into a single .pdf file. You can convert each file to .pdf format first, or you may be able to convert and combine in one step—check your program’s instructions. When combining the files, add them in the following order: cover, signature, narrative, budget summary, budget detail. Name the combined file:

[short name of applicant] 2016 Full Application

Submit Using Email

Prepare an email with the title:

[short name of applicant] 2016 AtJ Application

Attach your application file(s) and email it to Tina Sibbitt at aoctrs@nmcourts.gov .

If you encounter any problems when submitting your application, call Tina Sibbitt at (505) 476-0509 **before 3:00 PM on Wednesday, January 20, 2016**. She will correct the problem or give you instructions on how to submit your application.